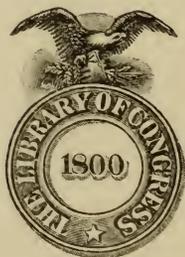


THE FACTS OF
FAITH

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CHARLES EDWARD SMITH

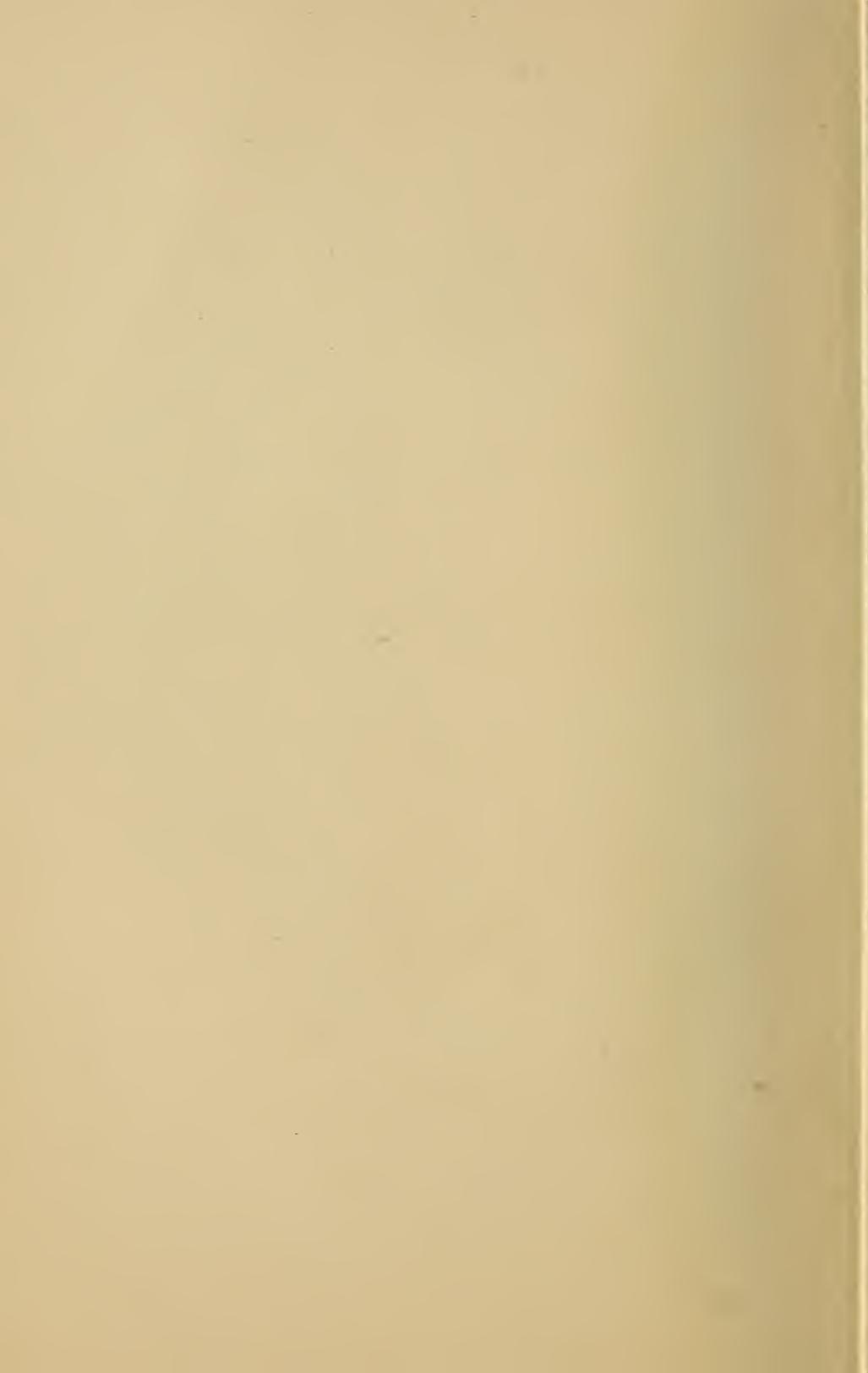


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THE FACTS OF FAITH

BY

CHARLES EDWARD SMITH, D.D.

Author of "Baptism in Fire,"

"The World Lighted"

"Walk about Zion, and go round about her !
Tell the towers thereof !
Mark ye well her bulwarks !
Consider her palaces !
That ye may tell it to the generations following."

Psalms xlvi: 12, 13.

"The supreme need of the hour is not elastic currency, or sounder banking, or better protection against panics, or bigger navies, or more equitable tariffs, but a revival of faith, a return to a morality which recognizes a basis in religion."

Wall Street Journal.



BOSTON
SHERMAN, FRENCH & COMPANY
1910

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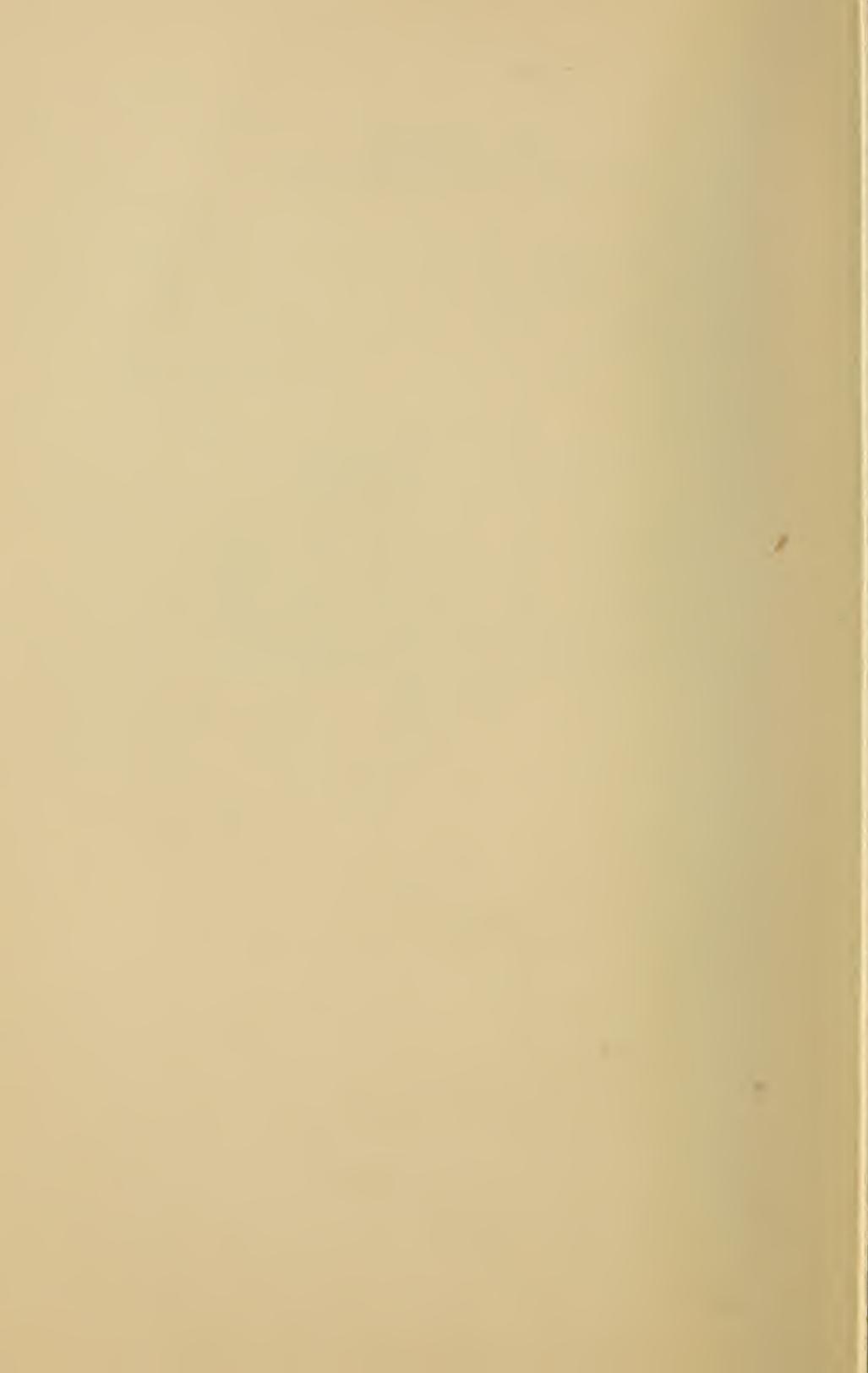
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TO
MY BELOVED
WIFE AND DAUGHTER
AND THE TWO FRIENDS

ASSOCIATION WITH WHOM HAS LONG GIVEN
ME SO MUCH PLEASURE AND WHO, BY THEIR
INTEREST IN THIS WORK AND THEIR WISE
COUNSEL REGARDING IT, HAVE CONTRIBUTED
TO ITS PRODUCTION, IT IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED



FOREWORD

I deem it only fairness to myself and my readers to say that the *facts* given are, primarily, the facts of *my own* faith, which I recognize as assured beyond reasonable doubt, and therefore rest upon without misgiving.

At the same time since my faith and the facts which it recognizes are, in general, the same that are known as Protestant Christianity, they have the endorsement of that great body of Christian people whose claim to be the most intelligent, well-informed, and consistent representatives of Christianity it is hard to dispute.

Moreover, since other very large communions claiming to be Christians, while differing very widely from Protestants in many important respects, yet agree with them regarding many fundamental facts and truths, this agreement must be admitted to swell to very large proportions the number of those for whom the facts of this book are the real and undisputed "facts of the Faith."

I have set them down under the impulse to make clear to myself just what I believe, and what good and sufficient reason I have for believing it, knowing full well how much is gained

FOREWORD

in clearness of thought, and precision of statement, and, therefore, in confidence of correctness, by compelling one's self to reduce the random and floating ideas of the mind to exact and positive expression.

But although this work has been done, first of all, for my own benefit, I am not without the strong hope that it may prove of advantage to others.

Robert Browning once wrote to a friend, "I want you to give my conviction a clinch."

There are a good many of us, Christian believers, who need to have our convictions clinched. We have been living so long in an atmosphere of doubt; unbelief has been so arrogant and aggressive, and never more so than now, that it is not strange that faith should sometimes waver as to the value of its own evidences.

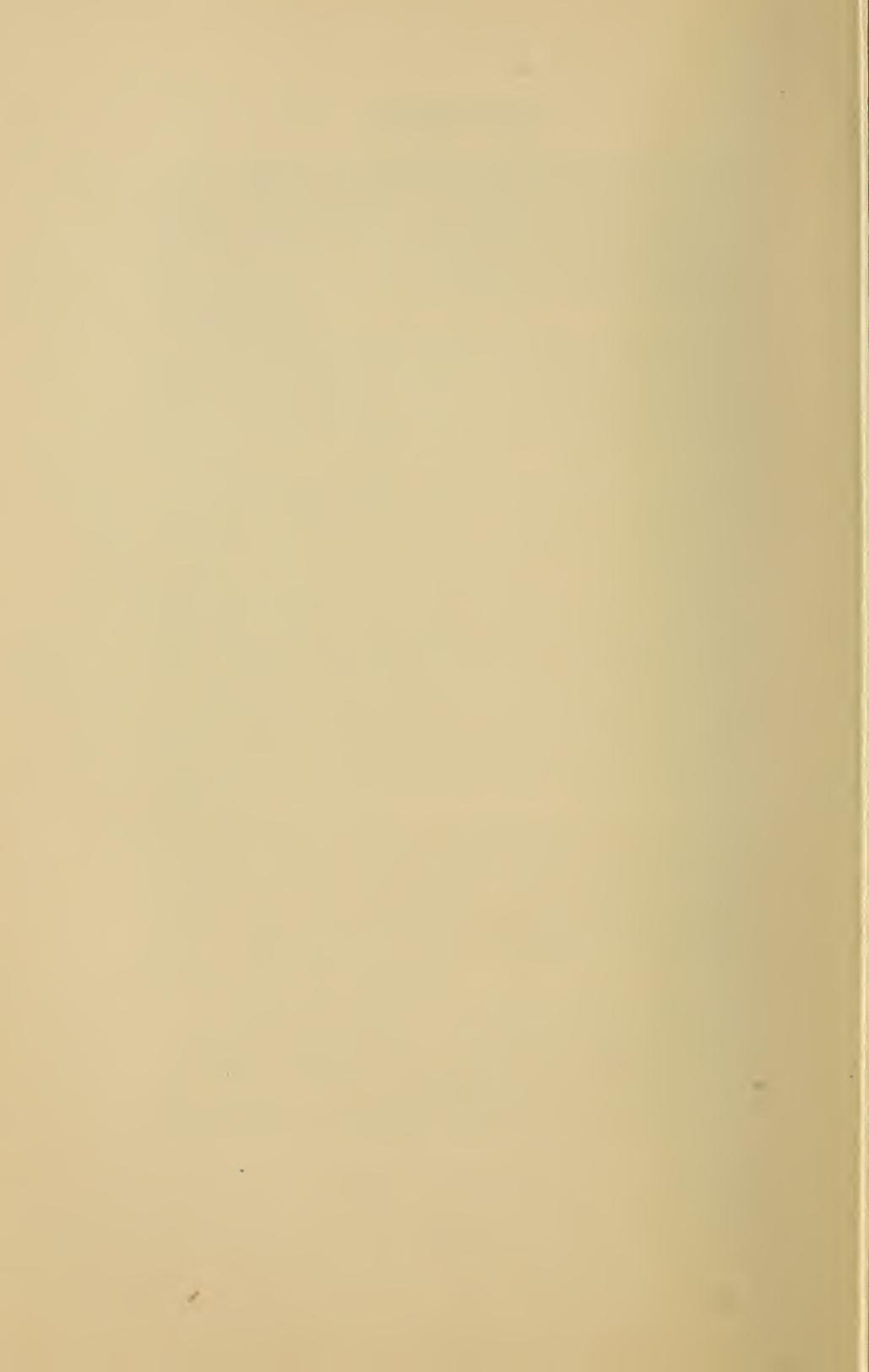
It will be a great satisfaction to me if this exhibit of facts of faith, which reassures me, should also reassure any of my brothers who have been unnecessarily alarmed by the giant fire-crackers of infidelity.

And if, in addition to this, I am able to awaken the attention, arouse the interest, and enlist the serious and heartfelt consideration of other minds in matters which so greatly concern

FOREWORD

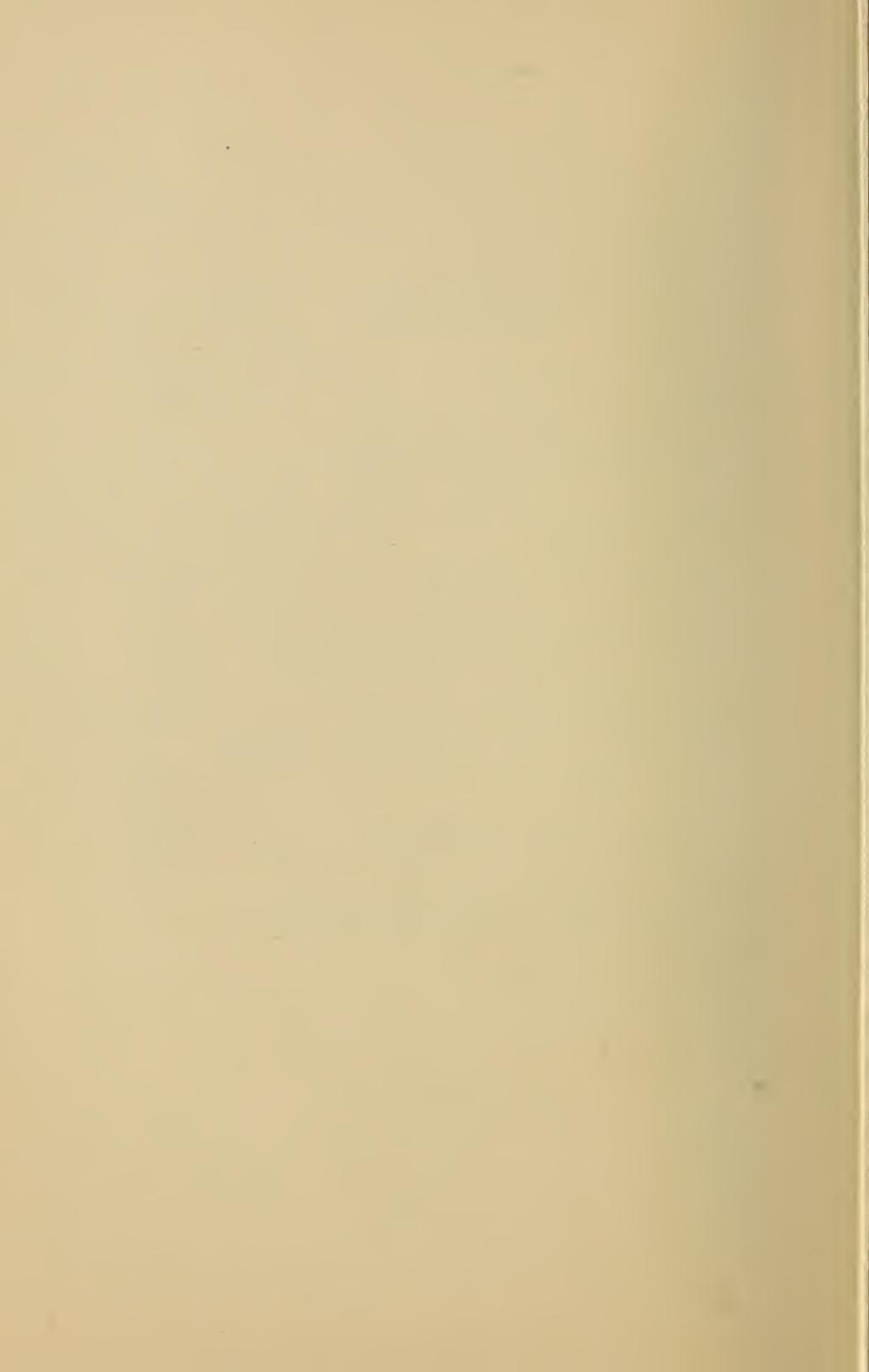
them as facts of Christian faith, I shall accomplish a purpose for which I shall be profoundly grateful, and with which I am sure God will be well pleased.

C. E. S.



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I

THE VALUE OF FACTS

There are a good many people who do not know the value of facts — at any rate in the most important province of thought and life, which is, of course, the province of religion.

They have an idea that all religions are equally true, and, perhaps, equally false. They see that the votaries of each seem equally certain of the truth and value of their own system, and equally determined to live and die according to its teachings. From this they conclude that these various religions are either of no consequence at all, or are all equally useful for religious purposes.

Is there, then, no important difference between them? Is there no means of discriminating the true from the false, and the real and precious from the unreal and worthless?

Suppose it could and should be shown that Christianity, and Christianity alone, is based on *facts*, and that all others are based on *fictions*! Would that not be a sufficient reason for regarding Christianity as the one true and abso-

lute religion, and all the others as counterfeits, which must, sooner or later, pass away?

The superior value of facts in other directions there is no difficulty in realizing.

A gold mine is a *fact*. That gold is actually taken from such a mine, there is abundant and satisfactory evidence, which puts the matter beyond all doubt.

That gold can be extracted from baser metals, such as lead and iron, is a *theory*, which was widely received in the middle ages, and many lives and much treasure were devoted to the discovery of a process by which gold could be obtained from that source. Occasionally this theory is revived in these days. But nobody has ever succeeded in getting gold in this way, though the alchemists, as they were called, were very sure it could be done.

A gold mine is a positive, substantial, certain *fact*, in which it is wise and sane to believe.

Alchemy is an unproved *theory*, in which to put any confidence would be foolish in the extreme.

Wireless telegraphy was at first a mere *theory*, which might possibly be true, but which needed to be demonstrated before it could be accepted. But when, in crossing the ocean, I actually read a message which a fellow passenger had re-

ceived from his father on board a steamship a hundred miles away, in answer to an inquiry telegraphed by my fellow passenger from our own ship, I was sure that wireless telegraphy was no longer a mere theory; it had become an accomplished fact.

A theory may be true or it may be false. While that remains undetermined, conduct cannot be safely based upon it. But a fact is a sure foundation, if it be big enough and strong enough, for the superstructure which it is proposed to rear.

The examples which have been given illustrate the superior value of facts over theories. In one case the facts *destroyed* the theory, though it had been long and tenaciously held; in the other the facts *established* the theory, though it had been stubbornly disputed and widely disbelieved.

Every trial in a court of justice makes manifest the general realization of the superior importance of facts. Witnesses are questioned as to the *facts* they know, not the opinions they may hold, regarding the merits of the case under consideration. Each advocate endeavors to show that the facts are on his side rather than on his opponent's.

The single fact that the paper on which a

promissory note was written bore a water-mark later than the date once overturned all the claims and arguments of the holder of the note.

The fact that the almanac showed that the moon was not shining, on a certain night in which a person was accused of having committed a crime, proved the accused to be innocent, and secured his acquittal.

All progress in science is progress in the knowledge of the facts. Theories are maintained or abandoned as they are found to agree or disagree with the facts ascertained. It was once believed that the world was flat, and George Kennan found a high Buddhist dignitary in Siberia who still adheres to that notion; but the world generally knows too much to do that. The single fact that the earth can be sailed around destroys the theory.

Right here it becomes necessary to show the difference between *faith* and *credulity*. They are often confounded, and spoken of as essentially the same.

Faith is confidence in *facts*, and truths *supported by facts*. *Credulity* is confidence in *theories*, or *imaginations*, or *assertions*, which are unsubstantiated by facts or any reliable proof.

Faith is often misrepresented as confidence

which is the strongest when that which is believed in is the most improbable. On the contrary, faith demands not only probability, but probability approaching certainty. It asks for positive and incontrovertible evidence. It is credulity that is willing to believe without evidence, and, though it sometimes strains out a gnat, swallows a camel without difficulty. The wilder the fiction, the greater the lie, the more impossible the fraud, the readier is credulity to believe in it and to live by it.

I say *believe*, and as credulity believes, so it may be said to have a kind of faith. It is obvious that we must discriminate between the two senses in which the word is used. By faith I mean that which saves, not that which destroys. I mean the faith which is said, in Scripture, to work by love, and purify the heart, and overcome the world — that is, *Christian* faith.

If, now, it can be shown that Christian faith alone rests upon facts, and truths supported by facts, and all other religions, as well as irreligions, have no facts worthy of confidence, the vast difference between Christianity and other beliefs and unbeliefs will disclose itself, and Christian faith take its rightful place as the only belief that is any better than credulity.

It becomes all the more necessary to perceive this for the reason that we are being assured in our day, as perhaps never before, that the facts of Christianity are of no consequence.

The assailants of Christianity attempt to shake public confidence in every historical statement in both Old and New Testaments. They endeavor to take away from us the facts of Revelation, Incarnation, the Sinless Christ, his Atoning Death, his Triumphant Resurrection, and everything beside on which Faith can rest.

But at the same time they assure us that Christianity remains; that these facts are of no consequence; that we still have the essential ideas of Christianity; that the temple of truth which has been built upon the "foundation of the apostles and prophets," Jesus Christ himself being "the chief corner-stone," will still stand, and even be firmer than before, when its foundation is taken away.

What is this? Is it common sense?

Is it the unthinking carelessness of miners, who in their greediness for gain excavate great caverns beneath a town until its weight breaks the crust, and it tumbles into the abyss?

Is it the strategy of enemies, who conceal their sapping and mining from the garrison of the fortress they are besieging, until they have

placed their explosives beneath the fortifications, and can topple them into ruins?

Or is it only the brainless word-mongering of theorists, like the old philosophers, who said that all the qualities of a substance may be removed, and yet the substance remains?

Whatever it is, it is best that we should appraise it at its real value.

If the enemies of Christianity make great efforts to remove the facts on which it rests, do they not thereby show how important those facts are in their own estimation?

Let us not be cheated out of that which is unspeakably precious! Let no one, whether he be seeming friend or apparent foe, deceive us as to the value of the great facts of religion on which Christianity, and Christianity alone, rests with a firmness and immovableness like that of the everlasting hills!

II

THE SELECTION OF FACTS

If it should be claimed that other religions besides the Christian are also based upon facts, it becomes necessary to ask, *what kind of facts* afford a true and safe foundation for a religious hope?

In some sense, everything is a fact, or perhaps it may be better to say that there is a fact about everything. It is a fact that men have had all sorts of notions, fancies, dreams, and have made all sorts of guesses, on every conceivable subject. But all those notions, fancies, dreams and guesses have not been correct, valuable and practical conceptions of the subjects about which they have been made.

On the contrary, many of them have been false, worthless, misleading and pernicious when the subject had any important relation to life, conduct and happiness.

A small boy having heard that Mr. Roosevelt had gone to Africa to shoot lions, left his father's house in an American town, expecting to shoot lions with his toy gun. It was a fact

that he had such an expectation, but there were no facts on which such an expectation could be reasonably based.

Savages in Africa are said to be in mortal fear of a gigantic scare-crow, called Mumbo Jumbo. A man of whom they have no fear at all in his ordinary appearance disguises himself with a towering head-dress of sticks and old clothes, and straightway he becomes the arbiter of life and death, and is submitted to and worshipped as a god. It is a fact that the savages have these absurd and degrading ideas, but those ideas do not spring from any facts worthy of the consideration of a rational being.

We must wisely *select our facts*, then, when we set out to choose our religion. The kind of facts on which any religion is based determines the character of the religion.

Are all religions based on equally substantial and pertinent facts? If not, then they are not all equally worthy of respect and confidence. If, upon investigation, it should be found that one, and but one, and that one, Christianity, has the facts to support it which religion absolutely needs—then we must conclude that only Christianity is entitled to our confidence, and must command and obtain our confidence.

This is what the Author of the Christian religion himself claimed. He said: "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house *upon a rock*; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was *founded upon a rock*." (Matt. vii. 24)

Was he not right in reminding us that we must have firm foundations for our religion?

One's religion is the house of his soul, within which he must find rest from care, comfort from sorrow, safety from those tremendous storms of remorse and retribution to which, as a sinful and responsible being, he is liable, sooner or later. It needs to be built on rock, not sand.

Religion is the bridge on which the soul must cross the gulf between earth and heaven. Its piers must be sunk through the concealing waters and the overlying mud to the bed-rock of the sea. No matter how much time and trouble it may cost; that rock must be reached and built upon, or the bridge is worthless.

What is that rock? What are those rock-like facts which together may furnish a foundation as steadfast and immovable as the mountains?

III

FAITH ITS OWN JUDGE OF THE FACTS

The *right, duty and necessity of private judgment*, in all matters affecting welfare, duty and destiny, are illustrated and enforced by many of the saddest and most tragic pages of human history.

How many fatal accidents have occurred at railroad crossings of public thoroughfares, because of too trustful dependence upon careless flagmen, and the failure to use their own eyes and ears most sedulously by those who were venturing into dangerous places!

The *power to doubt* is the necessary balance of the power to trust, and the safety of the soul, in a world like ours, is guarded by its intelligent and judicious exercise.

That part of the Bible which exhorts us to put our hearty faith in its proper objects is no wiser or more divine than its earnest warnings not, credulously, to accept the ideas and pretensions of false teachers and false prophets. That these warnings are needed is proved by the tremendous fact that the religious history of

the greater part of mankind, down to the present time, has been that of blind leaders of the blind, of great multitudes accepting, unquestioningly, the pretensions of impostors, and of whole nations and races hopelessly ensnared by an unscrupulous and tyrannical priestcraft.

It is for every one, then, as he cares for his eternal destiny, to judge for himself, with all the faculties he possesses and all the help he can get, what the facts of religion really are, and how they affect his own soul's welfare, and that of others for whom he cares and for whose guidance he is responsible.

And Christian faith must judge for itself, with all its native and acquired qualifications, what facts it can and must recognize as true and solid foundations.

I want to show how many the facts are, how great they are, how substantial, how sufficient, as the strong, indestructible foundation on which Faith, and Faith alone, may be seen to rest.

I am of the opinion that Faith often fails to understand and appreciate itself, and am sure that those who do not possess it underrate and despise it. They do not perceive how mighty a power it is, and how beneficent its function in human life and human history. They confound it with credulity, and regard doubt as the

superior faculty. They suppose that, like credulity, it builds its house of confidence and hope on the "wood, hay and stubble" of fancies and speculations and falsehoods, instead of the "gold, silver and precious stones" of realities and well ascertained truth.

I would like to show how mistaken, and therefore misleading and pernicious, are these ideas, and how much more confident of itself Faith has a right to be than it often is.

I would have Faith follow the counsel of Scripture to "walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following." (Psalm xlviii. 12, 13)

I believe that if we can take this walk together, and observe these "towers" and "bulwarks," we shall be so impressed with the fact that they are impregnable as to be able to rest in the assurance that "this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death."

But in order to reach this assurance we must proceed thoughtfully, intelligently, with an honest purpose to discover the truth, and a willingness to give it fair and thorough consideration.

Above all, we must be clear. We must take no step without knowing just what we mean. Religious errors and uncertainties are largely the result of ignorances, misrepresentations and misapprehensions.

There are too many who are satisfied to see truth dimly and indefinitely, like Edward Irving, the friend of Carlyle, and for a time the assistant of Dr. Thomas Chalmers. Alluding to the exactness and precision of Chalmers in his teaching, Irving said that, for his part, he liked to see an idea "looming up through a fog."

There are too many spiritual navigators who are unwilling to take the trouble to decide whether it be land or fog toward which they are sailing, and therefore get wrecked on an iron-bound coast.

Edward Irving's mental habit finally carried him and his church upon the reef of a fanatical belief that they could exercise the power of speaking with hitherto unknown tongues, such as were spoken in the apostolic age.

Let us understand at the outset, then, just what we mean by *faith* as well as what we mean by *facts*, when we are about to survey the Facts of Faith.

By faith I mean that noblest exercise of the power of trusting in persons or things, which,

in a world where there were no deceptions or illusions, deceivers or impostors, would be the normal feeling of the soul, and at once a privilege, a duty and a joy.

By faith I mean the power which the Christian soul possesses, though it finds itself in a world where appearances are often deceitful and false teachers abound, of selecting the objects of its confidence with all needful prudence, calling to its aid all its faculties of investigation and judgment, and, when satisfied of their worthiness, reposing in them a trust strong because intelligent, and unflinching because bulwarked by proof.

And what do I mean by *facts*? I mean events which have certainly taken place, truths which have been established, beings and things whose reality is sufficiently apparent to the faith which I have described.

Faith which realizes the supreme importance of its quest appreciates its responsibility for making true decisions, uses all its faculties and opportunities for investigation, takes time enough to fully consider and reconsider its conclusions; it is this faith which I make the qualified judge of what deserve to be called *facts*, which demand and must receive consideration in the settlement of great religious questions.

The facts which such a faith recognizes, accepts and uses it may well feel sure of, even though they are denied by more than one class of persons.

The skeptic who cultivates doubt until it becomes a mental disease, and reaches its climax in doubting that he doubts, shows a lack of sound judgment, which deprives his opinion of all value.

Isaac Taylor, an acute English philosopher, said "To one who affected to question the received account of the death of Julius Cæsar, we should not say 'you want faith,' but '*you want sense.*'"

The theorist who is so possessed by his theory that facts which disagree with it and destroy it remain unseen and disregarded, is not a judge whose opinions can be respected. There have always been many such persons, whose infatuation with ideas which pleased them has rendered them blind and deaf to the facts which rendered those ideas impossible.

At this present time, the theory that all religious ideas have been evolved by man out of the darkness of primeval ignorance and savagery, without the least aid from a supernatural revelation, is persistently maintained by many educated men, in spite of the fact that such a

revelation has been made and is shedding the light of a revelation all around us.

It is like denying that the sun shines in the full radiance of the noon day.

The atheist and the agnostic, to whom this wonderful Universe, of which Alexander Pope, in his *Essay on Man*, so truly said, "Order is Heaven's first law," presents no evidence of a Supreme Mind, and who can believe, or seem to believe, that the adaptations, adjustments and contrivances with which the Universe abounds, are only happenings of "the fortuitous concurrence" of uncreated "atoms," can not be expected to accept the facts of Faith. But that rejection loses all importance when it is considered that the most likely explanation of such minds is in some fatal disease of the perceptive and reasoning faculties, which renders their conclusions on such matters worthless. So, certainly, thought the author of the line,

"The undevout astronomer is mad."

An astronomer once reproached an atheist who inquired who was the maker of a fine orrery, a mechanical model of the solar system, which he found in the astronomer's study, with his inconsistency in refusing to believe that the far superior mechanism of the Universe had a Con-

triver, while he could not be persuaded that the parts of the orrery had come together by chance.

There is another who cannot be expected to accept the facts of Faith: it is the *opposer of Christianity because it is too good for him*. Nothing can be more certain than that immoral and unrighteous dispositions so bias and cloud intelligence that the mind becomes incapable of correct judgment.

Richard Cecil, as a youth, fell into depraved habits, and then deliberately read infidel books in order to quiet his conscience by plausible answers to the Bible. In this way he became an infidel himself, and led others into infidelity, whom he could never bring back again.

Of such Jesus said, "They love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil."

Objections to the facts of Faith are, then, to be expected from all these classes, and from others not here mentioned; but there is something about them all which makes their objections worthless.

The skeptic, full of morbid doubt about everything; the theorist, enamored of his hobby, and as incapable of rational guidance as a runaway horse with the bit between his teeth; the agnostic, who, because he cannot know every-

thing about God, insists that he cannot know anything; and the bad man, who does not care what is true or right, but only what is agreeable to a depraved nature,—the fact that all these deny the facts of Faith is not an argument against them, but for them.

On the other hand, the character of those who accept the facts of Faith is a powerful argument for the correctness of those facts. It is the “pure in heart” who “see God.” It is they “who *will do the will of God*” who may expect to “know of the doctrines.” Jesus said, “They who are of *the truth* hear my voice.”

If we can have the consensus of such spirits, we may be sure of the foundation stones on which we build our faith. If these be “for us” it matters not who are “against us.”

“I design the search after truth,” said Bishop Butler, “as the business of my life.” Where is the person among all the opponents of Christianity, the acuteness of whose intellect, the openness of whose mind, the fairness of whose judgment, the extent of whose learning, and the excellence of whose character, qualify him to stand side by side with Bishop Butler, the author of the famous Analogy, of which the noble Gladstone edited a new edition in the closing years of his memorable career?

It would be hard to find him. But the peers of Butler, as qualified searchers after the great truths of religion — may I not say without fear of contradiction? — are numberless among those who accept the Christian religion.

We have a right to feel confidence in the verdict of such a jury.

And we ourselves, though humble and obscure, if our search be honest, careful and worthy of the subject, may well hope to arrive at sane and sound conclusions regarding the facts of faith.

IV

THE FACT OF SELF

Am I myself a fact? And is this question, necessarily, the beginning of Faith's search for certainty?

Assuredly it is the beginning. Presumptuous and vain as it may seem, when we are looking for rock-like foundations we must begin with ourselves. Humble as we may seem, low as we may estimate our own powers, uncertain as we may be about much, or even most, of what is included in self, we must be sure of something in that self. If we are not sure of ourselves we can be sure of nothing else.

We must begin here, or we shall end nowhere!

To begin with, I must be sure of myself as an *honest seeker after truth*.

No other deserves to find the truth, or indeed is capable of finding it. The natural and inevitable penalty of endeavoring to deceive others is to deceive one's self.

Not to be fair in the judgment of evidence, not to be candid in the consideration of facts, to be willing to mistake error for truth, and to

feel pride in making wrong look like right, is to dull one's perceptive faculties, and to foredoom one's self to become the victim of illusions and falsities.

The dishonest soul necessarily doubts honesty in others. There is not in himself the quality which he needs to find elsewhere, and missing it at home, in his own soul, he suspects its absence everywhere.

Faith begins and must begin with faith in one's self; if not in one's sinlessness, at least in one's sincerity.

That is the first fact for faith to build with.

And the second is that the tool he must work with to acquire real knowledge, the structure of his own mind, is an honest instrument, so constructed as to give correct results, and not to deceive and mislead one.

To measure with a yard stick that is more or less than thirty-six inches is to mistake the length one wishes to find. To weigh with dishonest scales is to cheat the buyer.

Theodore Parker once wrote, "It is for others to decide whether I have mistaken a little grain of brilliant dust in my telescope for a fixed star in heaven."

But one must know for himself that there is no dust in his telescope to deceive his vision.

There are those who distrust the soul's power to discover truth on account of the deceptiveness of its faculties.

They think that the very plan of the mind is a false plan, so that neither do the senses nor does the consciousness tell the truth about what they pretend to perceive. If this were true we should lack the very capacity for knowledge. If this were true the Author of our being would be a monster of deceptions, and the Universe a sham and an illusion.

At the outset, then, we must decide whether we will accept this view, or begin our search for facts with the faith that an honest Universe awaits our study, and a mind honestly constructed, and needing only to be fairly used, is to serve as our instrument.

Let me, then, set down, first of all, the facts that I am sure of about myself.

I am perfectly sure of my own existence; that I am alive, not dead; that I am awake, not dreaming; that my life is a reality, not an illusion, and is to be reckoned with as a fact.

I am sure that I am a person, a conscious, thinking, reasoning, feeling, willing, acting person; that, as such, I am far superior to and entirely distinguishable from the world of things; that, in some respects, I am wonderfully

and awfully *separate* from all other persons, in the Universe, while, in other respects, I am no less wonderfully and awfully related to them.

I am sure that I am a soul, and have a body; that however useful and even necessary my body is in this present state of existence, it is only the instrument which the soul uses, and not the soul itself. That it should be as good an instrument as possible, and therefore is to be taken care of most sedulously, is a matter of course; but my great concern should be regarding the nature, character and welfare of the soul, which is myself.

I am sure that I am a *knowing* person; that, within certain limits, I have the power of recognizing facts and perceiving truth. Not that I can know everything even about myself, but that I can know something, sufficient for practical purposes in any important direction.

I am sure that this power of knowing extends so far that I am perfectly able to perceive the truth of principles and the reality of facts which I could not myself discover. What some other mind, superior to mine in ability and larger in knowledge, might reveal to me, I am entirely competent to apprehend. For by far the greater part of my knowledge I am indebted to others who had larger powers or better op-

portunities than my own. Isaac Newton has instructed me in mathematics and astronomy, and Tacitus and Motley have been my teachers in history. I am not shut up to the facts which I can perceive and possess unaided. And again, I am not vain enough to think that no being in this universe knows any more than myself.

However, within certain limits, I may modestly, I must truthfully, assert and acknowledge that I am sure of *my own faculties*.

I am sure that my *senses* are trustworthy means of information regarding material things, for I have proved their trustworthiness in numberless instances. When their testimony is clear, positive and united I cannot doubt its correctness. Even the theorists who dispute that testimony, I observe, *take their fingers out of the fire* as uniformly as I do.

I am sure, too, of my *consciousness* as a truthful revealer of my inner life, though not of all that life. I know that there is more of my soul than what I am conscious of, but as far as I am conscious of mental states they are as real to me as the material world.

I am sure of those *intuitive truths* which I share with every other human being, which are the foundations of all knowledge and a part of the very structure of the mind. Among these,

and one of the most important, is the axiom that "*every effect must have a cause*" adequate to produce it. The contrary to this is simply unthinkable. Sophists have cast doubt upon its validity, but every one knows it, though he cannot tell how he knows it, and every one acts upon it continually. It is an irresistible intuition of the soul.

Another intuition which I am sure of is the *distinction between right and wrong*, and that I ought to do and be the right and not the wrong. How I make this distinction I do not know, but I do make it, and that it is a real distinction by which I ought to be governed I do not and cannot doubt. It is a moral intuition of which I am absolutely sure, and of which I stand in awe. The German philosopher Kant said that two things filled him with awe, *the starry heavens* and the *moral law*. Both are sublime objects of thought, but I doubt not Kant would agree with me in saying that, of the two, the more impressive and awe-inspiring fact is the *moral law in the soul*.

Darwin is said to have become uncertain of his intuitions through the influence of his theory of man's evolution from the brutes. This is a notable instance of the manner in which a

theorist confuses and bewilders his own perceptions of the most indubitable truths.

John Stuart Mill, also, once expressed his doubt whether two and two might not make five in some other world. The mind that thus hesitates to admit the validity of its own fundamental and necessary ideas must abandon all expectation of arriving at any positive knowledge.

I am sure that I am a *responsible being* and, as such, held to give account to conscience for my obedience to its commands, and take its praise or blame for my obedience or disobedience. From this responsibility I cannot successfully escape, any more than Pilate when he made a show of washing his hands in water, by putting the blame of my bad action on another.

Neither does it serve that purpose to throw the blame back upon my ancestors as having transmitted to me bad dispositions, or upon my contemporaries as having surrounded me with corrupting associations. However they may also be to blame, I am sure that *I* am to blame for any evil I have done or been myself. All the theorists cannot make me believe that I am not a free agent, and, more than any or all others, the author of my own character.

And *I am sure* that, wherever the praise or blame for my character may lie, *my moral character determines my destiny*.

Well-being and happiness are certainly possible, in the long run, only to the *right* kind of character.

Degradation and misery are certain consequences of the *wrong* kind of character, whatever or whoever may have had a hand in producing it.

When I consider what my position and prospects as a moral and responsible being are, I am quite sure that the answer turns, chiefly, on the judgment of conscience as to what my character has been and still is.

I am sure that the determination of this matter requires a *properly educated* conscience, and all the light thrown upon the subject which can come from any source.

I am sure the Bible is the very best source, and having reflected upon its teachings, *I am sure* that I am the *sinful being* it describes.

There is enough remorse in my conscience for the evil I have done, said, thought and been, to make me wretched as long as I exist, unless in some way my conscience can be propitiated and its accusations hushed.

There is enough depravity in my tastes and

habits to balk any essential success in my efforts to be better, and, unless arrested, to corrupt all remnants of a better nature still remaining in my soul.

I am sure that I have not the power, in myself, either to pacify conscience or to banish depravity from my nature, and am therefore in a situation very greatly to appreciate a gospel of salvation from the guilt and power of sin.

In this desperate emergency I am compelled to look away from myself for knowledge and power which I do not possess.

Like a shipwrecked sailor I scan the horizon to find any sign of one coming to rescue me.

Is there anything in me, or about me, which suggests the possibility of such a gospel as I need?

At the very foundation of my intellectual being lies that irresistible, intuitive conviction that *every effect must have an adequate cause*, and neither I nor any other human person can think the contrary. It is a truth that is self-evident, necessary and universal.

I am sure that I am an effect and must have a cause.

I am a complex and highly organized effect, abounding in wonderful contrivances, remarkable adjustments and adaptations, extraordinary

combinations, to which only an Infinite Mind with infinite power could have been equal.

I am sure that I perceive God.

With the Russian poet I say, " *I am, O God, and surely Thou must be!* "

Or, as that noble 139th Psalm puts it, " I will praise Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well."

I have not only found God, but I can tell somewhat as to His character.

He must be a *holy* being, or He would not have put this conscience into my soul which requires me to be holy also.

He must be a *kind* and loving *being*, or He would not have made me capable of these feelings, and surrounded me with so much to give me pleasure and joy.

I am sure that there is at least the *possibility*, nay, more, much more, the *promise*, in the very structure of my being, of an *almighty Friend*, who is able to do for me all that I need.

I am sure that the reverence of which I am capable belongs to Him, and that admiration and worship are the proper attitude of the creature toward the Creator.

I involuntarily turn toward Him with a prayer for enlightenment, help and salvation.

I await in hope a fuller revelation of Himself to me, such as I need and such as I am confident He is able to make.

In a word, my self-inspection has supplied me with numerous, momentous, essential facts, for which Christianity alone, supplies the complement.

I have found that Christianity is made for me, and that I am made for Christianity.

V

THE FACT OF A REVELATION

Momentous fact, if it be a fact, compared with which most other facts of knowledge sink into insignificance. The Christian religion claims to have a revelation from God, in the Bible, of all the information desirable and necessary on the most important religious questions, for every member of the human race. Is that a real revelation, and is it a fact that a real revelation has been made?

One cannot but hope that it is. If any one, and even a large number, should wish it not to be, and strive with enmity to destroy confidence in an actual revelation, that would be such a manifestation of human depravity as to strongly confirm what is said on that subject in the Bible.

It would be like the joy of pirates who set their captives adrift in mid-ocean, without a chart or compass, to find their way as best they can to some friendly harbor. Or like that of savages who desert their prisoners in some great desert or primeval forest, out of which they have no means to extricate themselves.

For what is desert, forest or ocean as an unknown and pathless extension, compared with the life we have to live and the death we have to die? And what must be the character of that heart that is willing to make our human course blinder, more confused and perplexing and more dangerous, less hopeful and happy than it might otherwise be?

It is certainly a fact that we *need a revelation* of religious truth.

It is a fact that God is the great Person of this universe "with whom we have to do," and to know his character, purposes and will is more important to us than all possible knowledge beside.

It is a fact that we are all involved in evils from which we know not how to escape, in calamities from which only God can deliver us; but as to whether he will deliver us we are all naturally ignorant.

It is a fact that all the wisdom of this world, independently of the Bible, has never been able to answer the questions of the soul regarding God, life, death and immortality.

It is a fact that no religion in the world except the Christian possesses anything worthy to be considered a revelation.

The most that can be made of the so-called

“sacred books” of the heathen, or of the conclusions of philosophers, ancient or modern, is, that they are *guesses*, though sometimes the guesses of very able minds, at the truths of religion. They show how little man knows, or can know, of himself, about the most important matters which concern him.

As for all modern pretensions to having received divine revelations, such as Swedenborg’s, the Mormons’, Spiritism’s, it is sufficient to say that there is nothing in these pretended revelations which is not attributable to purely human sources, and that they are generally regarded as impositions upon particularly credulous minds.

It is a fact most impressive that for any book to gain wide reputation as a divine book, as the “Word of God,” is well-nigh impossible.

Yet *it is a fact*, indisputable, that *this reputation*, to all other books impossible, has been *achieved and maintained* for thousands of years by *the Christian Bible*. The Old Testament enjoyed that reputation before the Christian era, and the Old and New together have held that high place for the almost 2000 years since that era began.

It is a fact that the Bible must possess the very highest qualities, to have obtained and pre-

served this reputation down to the present time and to be venerated and loved as the Word of God by many millions of many races, and especially by those who must be regarded as the most intelligent, virtuous and competent judges of what a divine book ought to be.

It is a fact that the Bible is the *greatest literary work* in the world. It stands in a class by itself, all others being far below it.

It is a fact that although the Old Testament consists of 39 books, by perhaps nearly thirty human authors, and the New Testament consists of 27 books, by ten human authors, there is a unity of meaning and purpose and style running through all, which makes them seem like one book; and it is consistent with the idea that the divine mind planned and ruled over the composition of all the parts.

It is a fact strongly supporting this idea that no book which has ever been written, not even any which the Bible itself has suggested and inspired, would be for a moment regarded as worthy to be bound up with the books of the Bible as an additional part.

It is a fact that the Bible is the *best book* in the world. It deserves to be called the Holy Bible. Its elevating and ennobling influence upon individuals and nations and races is a fact,

the evidence of which is abundant and familiar. To introduce the Bible into human society, even in that society's lowest and most degraded conditions, is to raise it rapidly towards the highest known standards, even the standards of the Bible itself, than which there is nothing higher.

It is a fact that the Bible is a book *for all time*, having in it that which has interested, instructed, comforted and elevated all past ages; and so far from being exhausted is it at the present time that it is more read, studied, discussed, objected to by enemies, and loved, defended, and extolled by its friends, than ever before. There is not the slightest probability that it will not continue to be the greatest book in the world as long as the human race shall last.

It is a fact that while, like Nature, the Bible contains many things the purpose and value of which have never yet been clearly perceived, it also, like Nature, contains many things so great, noble and excellent for us that they can be attributed only to their divine Author. For example, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the portrait of Jesus, are so far above all human inventions that they must be considered divine.

It is a fact that the Bible contains predictions of future events, the fulfillment of which proves

them to have been made by divine knowledge. Thus the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which was certainly written centuries before the coming of Christ, is such a vivid and detailed description of the closing events of his life as must have issued from a mind to which the future is as evident as the past.

It is a fact that the *conception of Salvation* which is peculiar to the Scriptures, as that of a fallen and lost race beyond all possibility of self-deliverance, to be rescued by God through Incarnation, Atonement, Regeneration, Justification, Sanctification and Resurrection, is so foreign to human thought and so impossible of human invention that it can have come to us only from God himself.

That this wonderful plan, which could have originated only with God, and which, in all its parts, God alone could execute, is the great subject of the Bible and may be found everywhere in it, makes the book eminently worthy to be a divine book, and separates it immeasurably from all other so-called "sacred books."

It is a fact that all attempts, of which there have been many, to discredit the Bible have proved futile up to this time. It is an anvil which has worn out many hammers. If we may judge the future by the past, the Bible will tri-

umph over all assaults which shall or can be made upon it.

It is a fact that no individual, race or nation has anything to gain by destroying faith in the Bible, but everything to lose. Peace of mind, comfort in sorrow, strength against temptation, kindness and justice between man and man, hope in death, are all promoted and kept alive by such faith, and are all in danger of perishing by its destruction. For the world to lose its Bible would be, apparently, to have the dark night of atheism and anarchy settle down upon mankind. From that conclusion shall not every one of us pray, " Good Lord, deliver us ! "

VI

THE FACT OF JESUS CHRIST

It is a fact that for now nearly 2000 years Jesus Christ has been the most important religious figure of the world's knowledge.

It is a fact that for all that time he has been regarded as the world's greatest religious teacher and the world's greatest man.

It is a fact that he has been worshipped as God and trusted in as Saviour by a constantly increasing number, of many nations and races, and that there were never so many who worshipped and trusted in him as now.

It is a fact that those who so regard him are not the savage, ignorant, superstitious and least enlightened peoples, but those whose conceptions of God are the highest which men have ever entertained, even those found in the Bible, of an infinite, eternal, all-wise, almighty, just, holy and loving being.

It is a fact that this beautiful and sublime conception is itself, largely, the result of the study of the character of Christ himself, as set forth in the Holy Scriptures, and that, *for God to be as great and good as Jesus Christ*, is an

idea which satisfies our minds, hearts and consciences, and meets our greatest needs and loftiest aspirations.

It is a fact that we get our knowledge of Jesus Christ not from any mere human biography or history, but from that greatest and best book in the world, which contains so much which could not have come from purely human sources, and is so far above all other literature that we are compelled to regard God as its only sufficient Author.

It is a fact that the four Gospels from which, principally, we derive our knowledge, while containing independent and peculiar accounts of this great Person, yet so wonderfully agree in their harmonious portraiture of his unique character, as is possible only from actual and intimate acquaintance with him, supplemented and completed by a divine influence which left nothing lacking in their representations or needing correction.

It is a fact that it is now known that the epistles of Paul were written, and in circulation, within only *twenty-five* years of the death of Christ; that these letters contain the essential facts of his history, which was therefore soon and widely known, as important and real facts are likely to be.

It is a fact that the personal claims of Jesus, recorded in the Gospels, to equality with the Father as the Son of God, are so clear and positive that the worship of Him as divine must be considered to have been desired and intended by Him.

It is a fact that His life and death were in the highest degree worthy of a God who should become man for the salvation of the world.

It is a fact that many things which Jesus said about himself, and which would surprise and disgust us if said by any other, seem entirely fitting and proper, because so completely in harmony with his exalted character.

It is a fact that the discourses, parables, promises, exhortations and denunciations by Jesus, recorded in the gospels, are of a quality such as we should expect from a divine-human person. No human literary genius ever composed a prayer appropriate to such a person, but the 17th chapter of John contains such a prayer. To suppose that John invented it is to rate him far above the most stupendous literary genius the world has ever known. His task was far easier: he had only to record what he must have heard Jesus say.

It is a fact that, in the judgment of those who are the most scrupulous regarding right and

wrong, Jesus is entirely without faults. Many who hesitate to pronounce as to his divine nature yet grant, and insist upon, his sinlessness. And he, though the keenest discerner and greatest teacher of moral distinctions, had no consciousness of guilt, and never asked for forgiveness. He is the one person of the human race of whom such perfection can be believed.

It is a fact that this moral perfection is not less wonderful than any of the miracles attributed to Jesus, and is itself a miracle which proclaims him all that he has been thought to be.

It is a fact that the miracles which he is said to have performed, and the supernatural manner of his coming and his going, are in perfect harmony with his claims and character as the Son of God, and exactly what we ought to expect if God should become incarnate.

It is a fact that the perception of his divinity by his apostles was the very rock on which he meant to build his church, and that up to the present time his prediction that the gates of Hades should not prevail against it has been fulfilled.

It is a fact that in all situations in which Jesus is described, and in all his relations to persons and classes, the propriety, dignity and beauty of his behavior never falls short of what

we might expect of "God manifest in the flesh."

It is a fact that the pathos, moral beauty and majesty of Christ's death, and the solemn and profound impression made by it, are all in entire harmony with its significance as a voluntary sacrifice for human sin, and that the general judgment endorses the famous saying of the French infidel, Rousseau, "Jesus Christ died like a god."

It is a fact that God himself could do nothing more or better than to sacrifice Himself to atone for the sins of His guilty creatures, and that to deny that He did this, in the person of Jesus, is to rob Him of his greatest glory, and to make Him less than Jesus himself.

It is a fact that the resurrection of Christ is so well attested that we can be surer of nothing than of that. So much has happened which could not otherwise have happened, that it must have occurred.

It is a fact that prophecy and history, the past, present and the future, have their only explanation, and indeed their only possibility, in the fact of Jesus Christ.

It is a fact that as Christ's birth is the central point of all history, all events being dated according to their occurrence either before or since that birth, so it was the crisis and turning

point of the world's history, when, from having sunk to the lowest depths of degradation and misery, mankind began to rise socially, morally and religiously.

It is a fact that the only intelligible conception of the meaning of human existence, the purpose for which man is designed, and the plan by which that purpose is to be effected, are furnished by Jesus Christ, and by him alone.

It is a fact that the only substantial foundation of which man has ever heard for a reasonable hope of becoming ultimately perfect and eternally happy, is that supplied by the promises and power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a fact that the only Gospel which has ever proved effectual in producing true repentance for sin and turning the heart toward God in loving trust and submission is the gospel of a Crucified Saviour, whose loving self-sacrifice is the expression, at once, of divine justice and divine love, and the highest proof man can have of his own essential dignity and worth.

VII

THE FACT OF THE CHURCH

It is a fact that the greatest and most powerful religious institution which the world has ever seen, having for its object the betterment of the race and the salvation of the soul, is the Christian Church.

It is a fact that it sprang into existence in a single day, only fifty days after the crucifixion of Christ, and in the very city where he had been crucified, and at the close of that day numbered more than three thousand persons.

It is a fact that on that very day it was substantially the same that it is now; with the same conditions of membership, the same doctrines, principles, methods, aims and hopes which have characterized it from that time to this.

It is a fact that the disciples of Jesus had been plunged into such dejection and apathy, by the apparently horrible and hopeless calamity of his shameful death, that nothing less than his resurrection can account for the wonderful vigor and confidence with which the Church began.

It is a fact that the wonderful descent of the Holy Spirit, with all its attendant miracles, in

the very manner described in the second chapter of Acts, must be added to the Resurrection in order to furnish an adequate cause for the sudden birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost.

It is a fact that from this time onwards the apostles and early disciples evinced no slightest doubt or hesitation, and were ready, if need be, to seal their testimony with their blood.

It is a fact that *within the first year* the gospel was carried, and the Church extended, through all parts of Palestine and into neighboring regions; that the Church at Jerusalem had grown to 10,000 or more; and that Saul of Tarsus, the greatest mind of that or any succeeding age with the single exception of Jesus Christ, and at first the bitterest and cruelest enemy of Christianity, had been converted and had become its most ardent friend and its greatest apostle.¹

It is a fact that the subsequent triumphs of the Christian religion over the inveterate hostility of Judaism and the apparently overwhelming power of Paganism can be explained only by its inherent excellence and by the supernatural co-operation of God.

It is a fact that the survival of the Church

¹ Dr. Behrends' Yale Address. See *Bible Student and Teacher*, April, 1909, p. 241.

through the Dark Ages, and during the vicissitudes of all the centuries since its origin, until at the present time its magnitude and influence are greater than ever before, is a manifestation of providential care and control, than which there could be none more convincing.

It is a fact that the doctrines of Christianity are so opposed to the natural conceptions of mankind, its motives are so contrary to human inclination, and the life it proposes and insists upon so distasteful to human nature, that nothing less than a new spiritual birth, as the regenerating work of God's Holy Spirit, can account for either the beginning of the Church or its continuance from generation to generation.

It is a fact that the corruptions of the Church at various times and in many countries, the decline of its piety, the perversion of its doctrines, the hypocrisy and priestcraft of those who have acted in its name, only render more wonderful the fact of its continued existence and the degree of the purity which it has been able to maintain. Its greatest enemies have been its false friends; its worst foes have not been without but within; a false church has been the most formidable rival of the true church; and the infidels from whom it has had most to fear are the infidels who have masked as Christian preachers and teachers in

its pulpits and press and schools. All these secret foes it has had in addition to all the avowed enmity of all the powers of worldly evil, and yet it lives on, undestroyed and indestructible. This is the great fact of history, which Bunyan represented by a fire on which water was continually thrown to extinguish it, but which was kept alive by oil secretly poured on from behind.

It is a fact that the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the observance of which can be traced through nineteen centuries to the very beginning of the Christian Era, are a historical monument of the origin and nature of Christianity, which cannot be successfully overthrown.

It is a fact that Christianity was the ark in which the treasures of learning, civilization and true religion were borne to us through that flood of ignorance, superstition and barbarism which prevailed in so many countries during many centuries of our era.

It is a fact that for the preservation of the Bible in the world, the maintenance of spiritual worship, the success of great moral reforms, and the practice and spread of humaneness, we are now, as we have always been, dependent chiefly upon the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a fact that the great missionary organi-

zations of the Church, which have been endeavoring for a hundred years to evangelize the nations of the earth, and which are continually enlarging their operations upon a more and more prodigious scale, have done and are doing more than all other agencies for the progress of the human race. The philanthropy, the unselfishness and the heroism of Missions are a continually recurring demonstration that Christianity is from God.

It is a fact that at the present time, after all the experiments of thousands of years, by all the races, nations, governments, philosophies, sciences, arts and organizations, to raise the world to a higher level, there is nothing in sight which gives such brilliant promise of success as the Christian Church. Its wonderful achievements in the past, its world-wide enterprise and aggressiveness at the present, and its evidence of alliance with the Ruler of the Universe and the Savior of men, give it a prestige which can be found nowhere else, and afford the happiest augury of its future complete triumph. *The fortunes of mankind are in the hands of the Church of Jesus Christ, as they are in no other keeping whatsoever.*

VIII

THE FACT OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

It is a fact that a peculiar, unique and blessed experience is common to all who truly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and really accept him as their Lord and Savior.

It is a fact that in these persons the mind is so illuminated, and the understanding so quickened and clarified, as to enable them to perceive the facts of self and of God, and the truths of Revelation, with a clearness and certainty which produce the greatest possible assurance of their trustworthiness.

It is a fact that there is a change of disposition and of tastes in such persons which amounts to a revolution, and that they love what they formerly were indifferent to or hated, and hate what they formerly tolerated or loved.

It is a fact that in these persons the will is now exercised to make entirely opposite choices to those which it formerly made, and that the motives which it allows to influence it are motives which formerly had for it no power.

It is a fact that to those who experience this change of mind, heart and will, the *worship* of the God revealed in the Bible ceases to be a distasteful and mechanical performance of duty, and becomes a delightful contemplation and adoration of the Being most honored and loved.

It is a fact that at the same time, and by the same means, the fellow men of the convert to Christianity are no longer regarded with indifference, aversion or hate, but with a truly unselfish affection and a desire to contribute to their happiness and ensure their salvation.

It is a fact that while these feelings are exercised toward all men without distinction of race, color or nation, the Christian feels a peculiarly strong and tender affection for other Christians, such as is fitting toward the spiritual children of a common heavenly Father.

It is a fact that these peculiar experiences and this remarkable revolution of character may be often, and even quite generally, traced to reflection upon some passage or passages of the Bible which have served, like spiritual seed, to cause the uprising of a new spiritual life.

It is a fact that the fostering of this new spiritual life, and the cultivation of it to higher grades of excellence, is the result of continued

acquaintance with the Bible, with confidence in its truth, acceptance of its teachings and submission to its guidance.

It is a fact that this unique Christian experience is exactly what the Bible promises and describes, and attributes to the supernatural agency of the Spirit of God.

It is a fact that the conviction of sin and the assurance of forgiveness are often, and most frequently, the results of the contemplation of the death of Christ, as described in the Gospels, and faith that, by that death, atonement was made to the divine justice, and pardon to guilty but penitent sinners rendered possible.

It is a fact that for these reasons, and the recognized inseparable and causal connection of the Bible with this precious Christian experience, it becomes to the Christian the *Book of books*, and proves its divine authorship beyond doubt or question.

It is a fact that because, *in the Church*, the Christian finds associates who share and confirm his own blessed experience and stimulate him to cherish and increase it, supplying, at the same time, the means of grace by which such increase is furthered, his love for the Church and his confidence that, like the Bible, it is divinely

originated and continued, become fixed and indestructible.

It is a fact that Prayer, in the truest sense, begins and is maintained as an indispensable part of the Christian life; and that the longer it is continued, and the firmer the habit becomes, the stronger is the conviction that God really meets and answers the praying spirit.

It is a fact that by this Christian experience life is ennobled, sweetened and made in every way worthier. It is directed to superior aims, occupied with higher thoughts, made stronger against temptation, more patient in trials, more resolute against difficulties, more enduring under adversity. In the humblest as well as the highest vocation, life becomes worth the living. The joys of Christian experience make all other joys seem small and inconsiderable.

It is a fact of Christian experience that death itself is robbed of its terrors, and changed from the greatest of misfortunes into the greatest of blessings. The dying Christian is often so conscious of supernatural grace supporting his weakness, removing his fears, and brightening his future, that the hour of his departure becomes to him an hour of triumphant entry into celestial gates. Innumerable instances of such

departures confirm the conviction that the Lord Jesus always fulfills his promise to come again and receive his disciples unto himself.

It is a fact that the world owes to Christian experience its greatest advantages and blessings, since it has been those who have possessed it who have been the world's greatest benefactors. As ministers, missionaries, philanthropists, statesmen and doers of good works generally, they have taken the leading part in the promotion of education, religion, freedom and civilization.

It is a fact that the reality, power and value of this experience are attested by too many witnesses and proved by too many evidences, to be reasonably disputed. The searcher after religious truth must give it a large place in his investigations, if he wishes to be truly scientific. That there are many who have never had this experience cannot be urged against it, unless it can be shown that they have supplied all conditions on which it is promised. Nor can the unworthy and injurious results of a corrupted and paganized Christianity be used to depreciate and disparage the experience of the actual followers of Jesus Christ. For them, all that has been claimed must be admitted in all its reality and power.

IX

THE FACT OF NATURE

It is a fact that the natural universe, including the human race, is a revelation of God, with which all other revelations must necessarily harmonize.

It is a fact that the descriptions of Nature in the Bible are the most beautiful, sublime and affecting to be found in all literature.

It is a fact that no conflict between the Bible and Science has ever been proved, although many attempts to prove such a conflict have been made.

It is a fact that each of several so-called sciences, at its first appearance, has been supposed by some to be capable of being used to convict the Bible of error; but each in its turn, as its facts came to be more fully and correctly apprehended, became a witness for the truth of the Sacred Scriptures.

It is a fact that some of the truths of the natural sciences, which have only recently been discovered through investigation, were anticipated by the writers of the books of the Bible, showing that they were inspired by Him who knew all things from the beginning.

It is a fact that these writers were wonderfully preserved from incorporating in their works the false ideas of Nature which were current in their times, so that the Bible contrasts so completely with other so-called sacred books as to show that it alone came from God.

It is a fact that statements of the Bible relating to Natural History, which scientists have for a long time confidently disputed, have recently been proved true, showing that the charge of error was based, not upon knowledge, but upon ignorance.

It is a fact that the Christian conception of God is based upon the revelation of Him in Nature, and includes and harmonizes with all that we know of Him from his natural works.

It is a fact that the Christian conception of man is the only one which makes an adequate account of his actualities and his possibilities, of his worst and his best, of what he is and what he may be.

It is a fact that human nature is fallen and depraved, with a tendency to gravitate toward lower depths of sin and guilt, and that in spite of remnants of a better nature and recurrent impulses to retrieve itself, it has no power to lift itself to a permanently higher level and achieve a thoroughly faultless character.

It is a fact that the most intelligible idea of the plan and purpose of the natural world, an idea consistent with all the facts, is that it is the appropriate *home of a sinful race*, whom God would reform, educate and save. As such it is fitted up, not with the ideal appointments which a holy race would deserve and enjoy, but with the furniture which sinners, not incapable of salvation, need and may be benefited by.

It is a fact that the human race are undergoing a moral and evangelical probation, the result of which appears to be the settlement of their final destiny.

It is a fact that for this purpose God has revealed himself to man in many ways, that better acquaintance with our Maker may incline us to repentance, reconciliation and entire concord.

It is a fact that Nature holds a mirror up to Man in which he sees the reflection of his own vices in the lower races of wild and noxious animals with which he has to share his dwelling place, so that he recognizes the phases of depraved human character as similar to the nature of bears, foxes, snakes, wolves and other dreaded wild beasts.

It is a fact, too, that the great Teacher, Jesus, used many natural objects as symbols of spiritual facts, thereby indicating that the primary

purpose of these objects was the religious education and salvation of men.

It is a fact that Jesus made use of Nature to show himself to be the incarnate God, and by such miracles as the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the healing of incurable diseases, the stilling of the tempest, and the raising of the dead to life, proved himself to be the Creator and Ruler of the Universe and the sufficient Saviour of his people.

It is a fact that the human conscience, by its recognition of the distinction between right and wrong, and the approval it renders for right and the remorse it inflicts for wrong, reveals the character and judgment of its Maker and his moral government over mankind.

It is a fact that in addition to conscience, there is a system of rewards and punishments under God's moral government, according to which the greatest benefits follow well-doing and the greatest penalties follow evil-doing.

It is a fact that the disposition to forgive offences, when the offenders appear truly penitent, is a characteristic of the noblest natures, and may therefore be expected of God.

It is a fact that, under all forms of human government, the disposition to pardon has to be exercised with great caution, lest the escape

of the pardoned from just punishment encourage evildoers to expect to be able to break law with impunity.

It is a fact that in all true sorrow for sin there is a desire to atone in some way for the evil done, that law may be honored and the injury to others repaired.

It is a fact that those who honestly endeavor to attain a high degree of moral excellence realize keenly the depravity of their own natures and the need of a change of heart, such as Jesus said must take place before entrance into the kingdom of Heaven.

It is a fact that in the natural world every kingdom has the power to lift the kingdom below it to its own level, although no kingdom has the power to rise above itself. Thus the vegetable kingdom takes the mineral kingdom and makes it a part of its own life, and the animal kingdom does the same for the vegetable kingdom. Unnumbered insects deposit their eggs in the stems or leaves of plants, whereupon the plant abandons its normal course and builds a wonderful dwelling for its tenants. In like manner, man lifts all kingdoms below him to other and higher uses than they would serve of themselves. So that being "born from above" is a general law of Nature, as well as the method of

salvation by which the Holy Spirit does for a depraved sinner what he could not do for himself.

It is a fact that the remarkable influence which some men exert upon others, by which character is changed and careers are revolutionized, affords strong corroboration of the doctrine that the Holy Spirit of God is able to exert an influence over the mind and heart, which is a virtual recreation and makes the person a new creature in Christ Jesus.

It is a fact that the Fatherly love of God for his human offspring, which Jesus so beautifully taught, is testified to by numberless adjustments of Nature and natural processes, which tend to give pleasure, gratification, comfort, health and happiness; while even pain, sickness, sorrow and death are often seen to work out beneficent results, which show kindness and good will to be the characteristics of the Creator.

It is a fact that the liberty of choice to which the Gospel addresses itself, the abuse of which is the source of all moral evil, is the indispensable condition of all really virtuous character and of all perfect happiness; it was, therefore, the crowning gift with which God originally endowed human nature.

It is a fact that that self-sacrifice of which even fallen human nature is capable, which is

continually demanded in every relation in life and which is cheerfully rendered by heroic souls, would lead us to expect that the God who made, loves and pities this lost race, would sacrifice himself for our salvation, in the very manner described in the gospels.

It is a fact that the self-sacrifice of another for its sake is the most powerful means of affecting a base mind, inducing a desire for reform and a purpose to be better; so that the death of Christ for us sinners is entirely in accord with all that we can understand of the philosophy of salvation.

It is a fact that the desire for a future life, and the general expectation of such a life, which have prevailed in all lands and ages, are exactly what we should expect in view of the fuller revelation of life and immortality made by our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a fact that the resurrection of the body in a form at once identical with the old, but new and far more glorious, is typified by Nature in many ways and numberless instances. The resurrection of the grain of wheat in the new body which God gives it, which, though so different and so much greater and more beautiful, is yet identical with the seed sown, is Paul's chosen illustration, in the fifteenth chapter of First

Corinthians. The butterfly, which reaches its gorgeous climax by passing from the caterpillar through the crysalis, is only the most splendid representative of the whole insect world, which seems designed to teach the Resurrection.

X

DISPUTED FACTS NOW PROVED

That Moses wrote the books attributed to him has been, and still is, widely denied, on the ground that the *art of writing* was unknown as early as 1500 B. C. But whole libraries of a far earlier date have been unearthed in Assyria and Egypt, containing works on grammar, geography, natural history, theology, astrology and history. The age of Abraham, who lived at least five hundred years before, was an age of culture. At Tel-el-Amarna, in Egypt, tablets have been found containing business records, and letters from the high officials of Palestine, disclosing the very state of affairs described by the book of Joshua.¹

The fact that *light was created before the sun*, as stated in the first chapter of Genesis, was long ridiculed, but is now generally admitted by men of science.

That *vegetation appeared before animal life* was also stoutly denied, but is now abundantly

¹ Prof. Sayce, "The Higher Criticism and the Monuments," p. 51.

proved by the beds of graphite, which consist of vegetable remains.

The *order of events* given by the creation-chapter has long been fiercely contested, but it is now established that there is no conflict between the Scripture record and that of geology.¹

That *the Sabbath* was primeval has been disputed, and its origin assigned to the institutions of the Hebrew people. But it is now known that it was observed in the most ancient times, and that it had then the sweet name — “*a day of rest for the heart.*”²

The story of the *deluge* of Noah, recorded in Genesis, and referred to by Christ as an actual event, was long considered the “deluge myth,” and is still so styled by those who do not seem to have heard of or kept pace with, the progress of the science of geology. It is now fully established that, since man appeared upon the earth, there was a tremendous flood, which suddenly swept him and the races of animals then living, from existence. It is now affirmed by the ablest geologists that “there is no other great physical catastrophe which is confirmed by so

¹ “New Biblical Guide,” Vol. I, p. 40.

² “Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament,” Vol. I, p. 19.

imposing an array of witnesses and testimonials." ¹

The *unity of mankind*, as descended in all its branches from the family of Noah, is a fact, the knowledge of which, we owe entirely to the Bible. It has, however, been disputed not only by infidels like Voltaire, who said that "no one who was not blind could doubt that Whites and Negroes are of different races," but also by statesmen like Calhoun and by anthropologists of wide reputation. But great naturalists, such as Buffon and Linnæus, have always maintained that the teaching of Scripture is correct; and finally, after the most searching and even microscopical study of race differences, Pritchard declares, in his "Researches into the Physical History of Mankind," that Science refuses to be responsible for the objections made in her name. The tenth chapter of Genesis, which, to the casual reader, is an uninteresting list of names and places, is the most important and trustworthy document which ethnologists possess, from which they obtain their knowledge of the ancient nations and places.²

The tower of Babel has been declared unhis-

¹ *Bibliotheca Sacra*, July, 1907, p. 544.

² "New Biblical Guide," Vol. I, p. 414.

torical, but it has been identified with the tower of Borsippa, a mountain-like structure a few miles from the ruins of the ancient city of Babylon. Its preservation through so many centuries is ascribed to the very well made bricks of which it is built, a fact which is particularly mentioned in the account in Genesis xi, 13.

The *history of Abraham* has been refused credence on the ground that everything about him is prehistoric, and therefore utterly uncertain, and if there ever was such a man he must have been a savage. But the city in which he dwelt before God called him, Ur of the Chaldees, has been identified, and its ruins "reveal that it was, in Abraham's time, a center of learning and of civilization, of the sciences and the arts, a place of wealth and luxury."¹ One of the ablest of living Assyriologists, Professor Clay, of the University of Pennsylvania, has said that the time of Abraham "was only about midway in the written history of man."

The beautiful *story of Joseph*, whose character and history are so remarkably like that of our Redeemer, has been assailed as unhistorical, and many of its details have been said to be inconsistent with the age and the country in

¹ "New Biblical Guide," Vol. II, p. 87.

which they are placed. But investigation and discovery have proved the story to be in exact and minute harmony with the Syria and Egypt of that time. The very Pharaoh who made Joseph his prime minister has been identified as Apophis II, one of the Shepherd Kings, a foreign dynasty, of a race akin to the Hebrews, who conquered and ruled Egypt for centuries. It has been learned from a papyrus, now in the British Museum, that this Pharaoh became the worshipper of one God,¹ a fact which is explained by the Scripture history of the rescue of Egypt from destruction by famine through the instrumentality of a servant of Jehovah.

The *authorship of the five books* purporting to have been written by Moses has been denied to him and *assigned to Ezra*, who lived a thousand years later in Persia and Babylon. In that case these books would contain unmistakable marks of their origin in Persian and Babylonian words, such as would be familiar to Ezra. On the contrary they contain many Egyptian words, some of them so ancient as to have lost their meaning by Ezra's time, and only now coming to be understood through discoveries by Egyptologists. Almost every cir-

¹ M. Mariette's "Histoire Ancienne," p. 167.

cumstance of the Scriptural history of the Israelites in Egypt has been found to agree with the memorials of ancient Egypt. The oppression which they suffered, which Exodus attributes to the fact that "another king arose who knew not Joseph," is explained by the recovery of sovereignty by an Egyptian dynasty, which expelled the Shepherd Kings. The very buildings erected by the Israelites during their bondage have been found, showing bricks at first with straw, and then with "stubble," and finally without straw or stubble, the supply having been exhausted.

The Pharaoh of the oppression has been identified, and the great calamities inflicted upon the nation by the ten plagues and the burial of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea, are attested by the fact that this Pharaoh had no son to succeed him, and Egypt lapsed into a condition of feebleness and unimportance, which lasted for many years.¹

The *Mosaic code* has been declared to have been impossible on account of the rudeness of the age in which it purports to have been made, but the code of Hammurabi, king of Babylon, has been found, and may be seen in the British Museum, a code which antedates the Mosaic law

¹ Speaker's "Commentary," Vol. I, p. 456.

by 500 years, being, in some respects, still more elaborate.¹

The *wanderings of the Israelites* in the Wilderness have been denied to be historical, and called the invention of Ezra, or some other priest who lived a thousand years later in some other land. But the country has been carefully surveyed, the record of the journey in the books of Moses compared with the topography and found to fit it, step by step, station after station, until the surveyors felt no doubt that "the Pentateuch was written by one who had taken part in the events which he describes."²

The *crossing of the Jordan* by Joshua and the Israelites, related in the third chapter of the Book of Joshua, has been disputed on the ground that no such overflow of the river at the time (April) when the crossing is said to have taken place could possibly occur. It has been said that at that time the winter rains have long since ceased, and the tributaries of the Jordan are dried up. Moreover, the account says that the overflow took place at the "time of harvest," which is later than April, so that the time mentioned seems too late for a flood and too early for the harvest. But Dr. Thompson,

¹ *Bible Student and Teacher*, July, 1907, p. 46.

² "New Biblical Guide," Vol. III, p. 363.

long a missionary in Palestine, confirms the Scripture. He says that the Jordan is not dependent upon tributaries, but is fed by great fountains, which become swollen by the melting snows on Hermon and Lebanon, and the flood reaches the neighborhood of the crossing by the middle of March, and continues for several months. As for the harvest, that takes place in the same locality at this early date, because the Jordan Valley is thirteen hundred feet below sea level and has a tropical climate.¹ Thus are the speculations of skeptical critics shown to be baseless, and the history found to agree with the facts of the locality.

It has been denied that the city of *Jerusalem bore that name* until the time of David, and its occurrence in the account of the Conquest of Canaan by Joshua proves, it has been said, that that account was written long after the time of Joshua. But among the finds at Tel-el-Amarna, in Egypt, is a letter from the king of *Jerusalem*, and it is now evident that the name is Babylonian and came into Palestine "when Babylonian writing and culture first penetrated to the west."²

The history of *the period of David and*

¹ "The Land and the Book," Vol. II, p. 454.

² "New Biblical Guide," Vol. IV, p. 397.

Solomon, in the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, has been declared to be unreliable, as the compositions of writers long after the age described. But the discoveries of archæologists all strongly confirm the Scripture record. Two discoveries of this kind may be mentioned here.

First, it has been found that at this time the rival empires of Assyria and Egypt were both reduced to such a feeble condition as to allow David and Solomon opportunity to augment their forces and extend their conquests without interference from any great power of the world.

Second, the excavations made at Jerusalem by Captain Warren, of the Palestine Exploration Society, disclosed the very great and costly foundation-stones of the Temple, which were prepared and laid by Phœnician builders employed by Solomon, with the very builders' marks for rightly placing them still upon them in red paint and in Phœnician characters; so that no fitting was necessary at the Temple site, according to the account in the sixth chapter of First Kings.¹

To this it may be added that the list, in the ninth and tenth chapters of I Kings, of articles

¹ "Recovery of Jerusalem," pp. 138, 139.

brought by the navy of Solomon from Ophir," almug trees, gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks," has been interpreted and verified by Max Muller, who says that the names are Sanscrit, the language which was spoken at that time by the people of India, near the mouth of the Indus, where the articles could be found.

It has been denied that there ever was such a people as *the Hittites*, mentioned in Genesis x. 15: II Kings vii. 6, and elsewhere in the Old Testament. This denial was made on the ground that no allusion to them had been found in any other book than the Bible. But the monuments, both of Egypt and of the Hittites themselves, have given us accurate portraits of these people, and we now know that they were a great and warlike race, who were in Southern Palestine in the days of Abraham, but had been driven back to Northern Syria in the time of Joshua.¹

The *scene on Mount Carmel*, when, after a severe famine, Elijah challenged the priests of Baal to prove the power of their divinity by bringing down fire from heaven to consume their sacrifice, has been discredited as "legendary"

¹ Sayce's "Higher Criticism and the Monuments," pp. 15, 16, 140-143.

and the "creative work of popular fancy." As yet the history admits of the comparison with the results of research only at two points, but at both of these it is confirmed. The famine spoken of is proved by Josephus to have occurred at the time mentioned by the quotation from Menander, an ancient Greek historian. The peculiar manner in which the priests of Baal are said to have worshipped, leaping and cutting themselves with knives, is confirmed by an inscription found upon an ancient temple of Baal at Beyrouth, and by descriptions of such worship by Lucian, Cattulus, and by Livy.¹

The *healing of Naaman*, the Syrian, by Elisha has been dismissed by a recent critic as a "curious marvel, of no practical importance." But as our Lord spoke of it as an actual occurrence of great significance, it seems worth while to refer to it. The only real difficulty in the account is in Naaman's boast that Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, were better than all the waters of Israel. The difficulty grew out of the fact that there is but one river at the city of Damascus. But it is now known that, in Naaman's time, that was the name of the *country* as well as of the city, and not far from

¹ "New Biblical Guide," Vol. V, pp. 389-398.

the city the two rivers are to be found, sufficiently beautiful and important to justify the Syrian's partiality.¹

The *book of Esther* has been declared to be a "work of the imagination," without the marks of an historical composition." Almost every person in it and nearly every event or custom related, has been assailed as fictitious. The writers of articles in recent Bible dictionaries and encyclopædias do not seem to have learned that the historical accuracy of the book has been thoroughly established, but such has been the case. Ahasuerus has been identified as the Xerxes the Great of Persia; Shushan the palace has been found and described, and the book has become our highest authority for the manners, customs and events of the time and the country to which it relates.²

The *book of Jonah* has been called a fable, and we have been taught, in the name of Science, that the swallowing of Jonah by a fish is an impossibility on account of the contracted throat of the whale, the largest fish of which we know. As it is not said that it was a whale, but that "*God prepared a great fish,*" it is not

¹ Dr. Porter in *Journal of Sacred Literature*, New Series, Vol. V, p. 46.

² *Bible Student and Teacher*, June, 1905, p. 437.

necessary to meet this objection, but it is now removed by Science itself. It is now known that of some fifty-one species of whale, of only one, the Greenland whale, is it true that the throat is so contracted.¹

I mention but one more of these disputed facts, and it is a most notable one.

Belshazzar, the king of Babylon, at whose idolatrous feast the miraculous handwriting appeared upon the wall and was interpreted by the prophet Daniel, has been declared to be a myth, and the book of Daniel, therefore, a forgery. The ground of this charge was the absence of this king's name from any known history. But a cylinder which has been disinterred at Ur, Abraham's own city in Chaldea, and which is now in the British Museum, contains an inscription, which is a prayer of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, that his god would be gracious to Belshazzar, his eldest son. This inscription convinced Sir Henry Rawlinson that the son had been co-regent with his father at the time the city was captured, and this explains why Daniel was made the *third* ruler in the kingdom, as stated in Daniel v. 39.²

This list might be extended much farther, did

¹ *Bible Student and Teacher*, Sept., 1905, p. 176.

² "New Biblical Guide," Vol. II, p. 86.

the limits of this work permit. But enough has been said to show how often denials of Scripture statements are made in pure wantonness of spirit and sheer ignorance of facts, instead of in sober regard for truth and a modest hesitation to impugn a great and venerable authority. Those who have realized, in the reading of this chapter, how many and how great have been the "*mistakes*" of those who have charged Moses and other Bible authors with error will, it is hoped, be slow, henceforth, to give too hasty credence to such charges, and will have a wholesome confidence that if mistakes have been made it is not the greatest book in the world that has made them.

XI

A FINAL SURVEY OF THE FACTS

Now that we have glanced at some of the facts of Faith, it is possible to form some proper conception of their meaning and value. We ought by this time to realize their importance.

To begin with, *how numerous* they are!

Let no one suppose we have exhausted the list, or even mentioned the most of them! In truth, we have only produced samples of that vast host which only He "who calleth the stars by name" can number. The Bible, Science of every kind, History, personal experiences, all departments of human life and human knowledge are full of them.

Isaac Newton said that he had "only picked up a few pebbles on the beach" of truth. That is all any one can do. There are so many facts, there is so much to be known, that, after all our learning, the most still remains unknown. That, however, cannot justly deprive what is in sight of our admiration.

The ore that still remains untouched in the mountains is, perhaps, far greater in quantity than that which has been mined. But when one

thinks of the immense amount that has been taken out, and is now being manufactured or is visible in structures and implements and machinery and all kinds of forms for all kinds of uses, the total seems overwhelmingly enormous.

So of the known facts which are available for Faith's purposes; they are like the sand that is upon the seashore, innumerable.

But not, like the grains of sand, do they seem small and insignificant. On the contrary, they impress us as *great* facts, if we have obtained any adequate idea of their magnitude. Their importance, in the world of morals and religion, is only symbolized by that of the mighty suns and systems of the physical universe.

For example, consider the *greatness of the fact of the Bible!* That there should be *one* book, far and away the greatest of all books, even as literature; and when considered in its moral and religious character and influence, what the dying Sir Walter Scott called it, the *one book* of the world! What a gigantic fact that is, that, among books, *one stands by itself*, far apart from all others, alone and unapproachable!

What a great fact is Jesus Christ! That a young man who had lived only to the age of thirty-three, lived a private and obscure life for

all but three of those years, wrote not a word to leave to posterity, died a death of shame, repudiated and denounced as a criminal by his own nation, should have become the greatest name in history, and influenced all succeeding ages for good more than any or all others — what a colossal, even infinite fact this is!

What a great fact the Church is! It sprang into existence, and was numbered by thousands, *only fifty days* after its founder had been shamefully executed as a criminal, and in the very city of his execution.

Within thirty years it established itself in the great cities of the known world, and repeated the wonder of the Mother Church at Jerusalem, by great bodies of disciples, in town and country, in Asia, Europe and Africa.

It is now, *after nineteen centuries* of existence, the most powerful religious body in the world, numbering its adherents by many millions, and exercising its influence over the greatest nations and the leading races of mankind.

It finds members even in the most degraded and depraved persons, of the lowest and most brutalized classes, all over the earth; transforms them into bright and shining examples of the noblest types of human character; and enrolls them as citizens of that kingdom of heaven, of

which the pure and perfect Jesus Christ is the only, though the invisible, King.

Its destruction has been threatened by every form of physical or mental force which the world possesses.

Its martyrs are numbered by millions.

Its most formidable enemy has always been, and still is, a *corrupt church* which usurps its functions, imposes itself upon human credulity as the only true church, and by its scandalous superstitions and crimes brings discredit and disgrace upon the fair name of Christianity.

It has survived all its persecutions by Judaism, Paganism, Romanism, and every species of false religion; it rode, like the ark of Noah, the deluge of ignorance and barbarism which we call the Dark Ages; has vanquished the repeated onslaughts of infidelity which have followed in these later centuries; and now penetrates and dominates the life of the twentieth century, with the confidence of eternal youth and the prestige of unconquerable power.

These great facts, like the great stones in the ancient wall of Jerusalem, not only astonish us by their magnitude, but unite to furnish a substantial and indestructible foundation for faith. How solidly and immovably the Bible, and Jesus Christ, and the Church, and Christian

Experience, and Nature, and History, stand together; opposing their united weight to all the efforts of time and circumstance to disturb them! Fancies may be displaced and dissipated, but facts remain unchanged and immovable from generation to generation and from age to age.

The facts of religion, like the facts of science, are too numerous and too powerful to be affected by doubt and dispute, when once they are seen and understood.

It was the *falling of an apple* which is said to have suggested to Newton the idea of the attraction of gravitation. But that was only one small fact out of myriads that might be mentioned of the same kind. Air falls, water falls, the sun and stars fall, the whole universe, in all its parts, exhibits the same phenomenon. When once this vast array of facts is perceived, the conclusion to which it leads is irresistible. No sane and intelligent mind any longer disputes the doctrine of gravitation. To do so would be to convict one's self either of ignorance or of the lack of common sense.

The facts on which Christian faith rests are of the same compelling kind — so many, so united, so irresistible, that when once candidly faced and truly appreciated, they must be accepted.

It is *that Christian who beholds* this adamant foundation of facts which underlies his faith, who remains undisturbed by all the repeated assaults of hostile criticism.

His faith is truly scientific, because he has considered and given proper place to the facts which bear upon the great questions of religion.

He sees that *unbelief is anything but scientific*, since it refuses a candid investigation of the facts, and is, in its very nature, incapable of appreciating them.

As for *rival religions, what have they to show* which can for a moment parallel the array of facts which substantiate Christianity?

Which of them has *a Bible, a Jesus Christ, and a Church* to put beside these great facts of the Christian religion?

Can you put Mohammed, the Koran, and their Arabs and Turks beside Jesus, the Bible, and the Christian Church, and think that they do not suffer by comparison?

It is but too evident what that religion has done for its votaries, for the judgment of Christendom was long since coined into the phrase, "*the unspeakable Turk.*"

Carlyle expressed the sense of the civilized world, regarding the most favorable view to take

of Moslemism, when he called it in his "Heroes and Hero-Worship," "*a kind of bastard Christianity.*" All that is true and good in it filtered into it from Christianity, which was already nearly six centuries old when Mohammed was born.

As for the Koran, it is sufficient to say of it that, compared with the "Arabian Nights Entertainment," the most, and almost the only, widely-known book of Arabian authorship, it is equally wild and fanciful, equally a work of fiction. The stories it tells of Solomon are borrowed fables from the Jewish Talmud. But here its resemblance to the "Arabian Nights" ends, for that is one of the world's favorite story books, and the Koran is, perhaps, the most stupid book in the world. "Insupportable stupidity," says Carlyle, who is disposed to say all the good he can of it; and he adds, "it is difficult to see how any mortal ever could consider this Koran a book written in heaven. . . or indeed as a book at all, and not a bewildered rhapsody."

What other religion is worth mentioning as a possible rival to that of Jesus? When Sir Edwin Arnold's "Light of Asia" was published, it was fancied by many that he had discovered in Buddha another Jesus. But the

mirage he produced soon faded into nothingness, leaving Jesus in his unapproachable glory.

Sir Edwin Arnold said, in effect, to a veteran Christian missionary, the late Rev. Dr. William Ashmore, who was his companion in a voyage to the East, that he had had no idea of making the "Light of Asia" the equal of the "Light of the World," and considered *one verse of the Sermon on the Mount* as worth more than all the sacred books of the Hindoos.

We are, then, and we cannot repeat it too often or realize it too deeply, dealing with a *world of fact and reality* when we are examining the documents and credentials of the Christian faith.

All other beliefs have little to show us except the cloud-land of speculations, fables and fictions.

It is not difficult to tell where fog and cloud cease and solid earth begins.

It begins with the *facts of Christian faith*. As we study them we feel that we tread on the firm ground of truth and reality.

But wherefore?

For what purpose are foundations, but to support superstructures?

We lay foundations only because we desire to rear enduring edifices upon them.

That deep and massive foundation, which is the wonder of explorers at Jerusalem, was laid that Solomon's magnificent Temple might be based upon it.

When we have the facts of Christianity fully in our possession, in all their solidity and certainty, we are inevitably impelled to rear upon them the *magnificent temple of Christian doctrine*.

For we instinctively ask, what do these facts mean? What truths do they imply? What becomes evident from their existence? What do they teach which it is important to understand?

When we have thought out our answers to these questions we have discovered *the doctrines* in which we must believe. When we have stated our doctrines in words we have our *Creed*.

Let us not be alarmed at these terms! They have been used to frighten people. The sophists of this generation talk of "doctrine" and "dogma" as not only useless and incumbrances, but as if they are a kind of mental hydrophobia.

It is common in these days to hear the promise of a new religion which is to be creedless.

They who make this promise do not realize that it is non-sense, unworthy of an ordinary mind, much less of one who claims to be able to teach men.

To be creedless and without doctrine, a religion must be truthless and idea-less; that is to say, it must be thoughtless and senseless. It must have no facts, for *from facts spring doctrines*.

Politics has its doctrines, true and false. We speak of the "Monroe doctrine," by which we mean President Monroe's idea of the peculiar relation of the United States to the other nations of America.

That "all men are created free and equal" is a doctrine of the Declaration of Independence.

That all government is rightfully "of the people, for the people, and by the people" was a favorite doctrine of President Lincoln.

Science has its doctrines, and always has had them. Concerning the facts which it discovers it asks, what do they teach? The answers to that question which it gives are its doctrines.

Sometimes they are true, and sometimes false.

If they are false, it is either because they are hastily made, before sufficient knowledge of needed facts has been obtained, or because human reason has been unable to comprehend their real significance.

The fact that water will not rise in a pump above thirty-two feet was supposed by Galileo

to teach the doctrine that "Nature abhors a vacuum." This was to attribute thought and feeling to the inanimate world, and Galileo realized that is was unsatisfactory; but in the lack of additional knowledge, it was the best that he could do.

Torricelli conceived the idea that what supported the water in the pump was the weight of the atmosphere, and partially proved it to be true by his barometer, in which a column of mercury, which is fourteen times heavier than water, stands at a correspondingly low level.

Pascal reasoned that if the weight of the atmosphere balances these columns at their respective heights at the sea-level, when the barometer is carried to the top of a mountain the columns will fall a distance according to the height of the mountain. This experiment being tried and proving successful, the new doctrine was established. Calculations made afterwards settled the question of the approximate height of the atmosphere. It had been imagined as extending to the moon, but was now found to be practically limited to the height of forty-five miles.

These illustrations may suffice to show how *doctrines spring from facts*, and not facts from doctrines.

Given a body of facts, and doctrines follow as necessary consequences. We can escape the doctrines only by refusing to look at the facts, or by disproving the facts.

If we are willing to see them and cannot disprove them, we naturally and necessarily come to some conclusions regarding their significance. These conclusions are doctrines. They are the truths which we have learned from the facts which we have found out. The statements of these truths which we make to ourselves, and accept as established, are our creeds, political, scientific or religious, according to the nature of the facts on which they are based.

All men may be said to have a religious creed of some kind.

Even the agnostic's denial, that he can know anything about God, becomes his creed, his conclusion regarding the matter of religion; and it is a creed that determines his attitude toward worship, prayer, Christ and the Church, equally with that of the devout believer.

The facts of religion, moreover, have this peculiarity, namely, that some conclusion *must* be made, consciously or unconsciously, positively or negatively, concerning them; since to reject them, as well as to accept them or even to ignore

them, is a conclusion by which duty as well as destiny, good and evil, joy and sorrow, the aims and purposes of life, its possibilities, successes and failures, are all determined.

The doctrines or politics of science are comparatively unimportant: we may leave them unsettled and suffer no serious injury.

But the fact of an Incarnation, if it be proved, cannot innocently or safely be left unconsidered. A divine Revelation is not a fact about which any one can afford to have no opinion.

Duty and destiny, and everything else belonging to man, are not the same thing, whether these are, or are not, facts.

If there be a Revelation it is because I need one; and my voyage of life is safe or perilous, and I make it with or without peace of mind, as I am, or am not, conscious that I sail by my chart or utterly neglect it.

Upon the facts of religion there can be, and there ought to be, reared a super-structure of doctrine which is to the soul a refuge, a fortress and a home. It may be small and simple, like an Esquimau's snow hut, but even that poor house protects the inmate from winter storms and Arctic cold. It may be large and elaborate, and worthy to be called a system, for the materials

are ample, and the constructive power of the Christian mind is able to rear a *Palace of Truth* which shall be both grand and beautiful.

Let Faith, then, know her facts!

Let her *realize* that they are *facts*, not *fancies*, *fictions* or *phantasms*!

Let her build upon them her house of rest!

And when the winds of doubt blow, and the floods of trouble come, the house will not fall,

FOR IT IS BUILT UPON A ROCK.

FEB 28 1910

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: August 2005

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